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SUBJECT: INDIA COMPLETES PLANS TO BUY FORTY MORE SUKHOI 30S

¶1. (U) Reporting from Aero India in Bangalore, Indian media quoted Chief of Air Staff S.P. Tyagi on February 8 as saying India would soon sign a deal to import 40 more Sukhoi-30 planes from Russia. The news, which was overshadowed in morning papers by multi-billionaire Ratan Tata's "exhilarating" - in his words - ride on an F-16 the same day, has caused a bit of confusion in Delhi as observers of the strategic relationship question whether this is part the anticipated Request for Proposals (RFP) for 126 multi-role combat aircraft (MRCA) which India has announced intentions to procure. Our short answer is that these 40 SU-30s complete a previous deal between India and Russia, and this most recent purchase should have no direct impact on the pending MRCA RFP.

¶2. (U) This "new" deal dates back to December 28, 2000, when the GOI announced a \$3.5 billion agreement for 190 SU-30s, fifty of which were to be made in Russia, the remaining 140 from kits licensed for production at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's (HAL's) Nasik factory. At the time, the Indian Air Force (IAF) had recommended procurement of 240 combat aircraft -- 50 more than what the GOI decided to buy at the time. The first indigenous SU-30s (or MK1, as the IAF version is known) rolled off the Nasik line in November of 2004, with the last of the Russian-assembled 50 arriving by the end of that year. Now, just weeks after President Putin's visit to India, the GOI has decided to move closer to the number originally requested by the IAF, and with the 40 additional aircraft being ordered, the total will add up to

230 aircraft. The 40 plane order is expected to be filled within three years, at a cost of approximately \$40 million each.

13. (U) Tyagi said in a statement at the time of the Sukhoi announcement that India is attempting to reduce the number of types of aircraft in its inventory, adding that maintaining spares and training crew was a logistical challenge and the IAF wanted to have as few variants as possible. Therefore, he was quoted as saying, the pending MRCA order for 126 fighter aircraft will be given to a single vendor and not distributed to two or more companies. Currently, India's inventory includes Anglo-French Jaguars, French Mirage-2000s, Russian MiG-21, 23, 27 29 and the original Sukhoi-30s, in addition to Russian transport planes. IAF Wing Commander Mahesh Upasani confirmed to the press that the SU-30 purchase was not part of the 126 MRCAs the IAF will soon be seeking.

14. (U) Tyagi also mentioned that IAF was negotiating a deal with Lockheed Martin for the purchase of six (to twelve) C-130s. The Letter of Request for this sole-source procurement was issued December 14, 2006.
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